GAMALIEL.

# ADVICE TO PERSECUTORS;

*BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF*

# A SERMON,

*PREACHED AT THE*

## METHODIST CHAPEL,

*In Norfolk-street, Sheffield,*

On THURSDAY, JULY 3, 1794.

*AND PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE HEARERS.*

By J. MOON, P. G.

"All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them."

JESUS CHRIST.

Nor let this weak unknowing hand,
Presume thy bolts to throw;
Or deal damnation round the land,
On each I judge thy foe.

*Pope's Universal Prayer.*

*Sheffield:*
PRINTED IN THE YEAR, 1795.
[Price Three-pence.]

BRITISH MUSEUM

# TO THE READER.

*WHEN the following Sermon was preached, some disturbance was likely to commence, on an extraordinary revival of the Work of God at* SHEFFIELD. *At that time, I had not the least intention of Printing it. Indeed, I had no thought about two hours before, of speaking on the subject: when a friend suggested, that a Discourse on those words of* GAMALIEL, *might then prove very seasonable and useful. As the reasons alledged in its favour, appeared to have some weight, on retiring, I further considered it, and determined to say something thereon, as God should assist.*

*Two things induced me to this conclusion; First, A hope that I might herein be instrumental in removing any unfavourable impressions already made on the minds of some persons, through the peculiarity thereof: And Secondly, Open a way for its more charitable reception, if any thing remarkable should follow.*

*On delivering my sentiments, some of our friends urged me to publish them. And although I am sensible that solicitation of this nature, is too common a reason to gain much credit with the public mind; yet, as it is a truth, I am not ashamed to acknowledge it as giving birth to this little Publication. At first, however, I totally declined it; judging my ability, if I have any for writing, to lie more in the way of* VERSE, *than* PROSE. *But being still importuned, I at length determined to set down what I could recollect, and venture its appearing to the world.*

*The following pages, then, contain the substance of what I delivered on the subject. It is not expected that a Discourse,*

*of*

*of which I had no note whatſoever, and of which, I had then no opportunity of writing any, ſhould be written verbatim. The language, in ſome places, may be a little altered, and ſome new thoughts introduced; but, as far as my memory helps me to recollect, it is in form and manner nearly the ſame.*

*Nor am I altogether without hope, however feeble the attempt, of its being in ſome degree uſeful. And, this, I am ſenſible, above all the reſt ought to influence us either in ſpeaking or writing.*

*If, on a peruſal, the candid can diſcover it calculated to anſwer that end, I am perſuaded, their clemency will excite them to excuſe any weakneſs they may find therein. And, at the ſame time, an end will be anſwered, for which I can be content to expoſe both my ignorance and weakneſs, to ſuch as are diſpoſed to criticiſe on Works of this nature.*

*That the Prince of Peace may uſe it for extending its benign influence, and the advancement of his gracious Kingdom, is the earneſt prayer of*

THE AUTHOR.

BOLD-HILL, Jan. 12, 1795.

# ADVICE TO PERSECUTORS,

&c. &c.

ACTS, 5, 38, 39.

*And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this council, or this work be of men, it will come to nought; But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.*

NO sooner did the kingdom of darkness begin to shake, than the prince of it began to rage. His power, however, for the present, was limited to a few [illegible] efforts made use of to support his sinking interest. In this infant state of the Christian Church, a peculiar terror seized every soul, inclined to oppose her sacred progress, while the Apostles, endued with power from on high, were every where preaching the Gospel, the Lord confirming their word, by miracles, wonders, and signs. The diligence and zeal with which they promulged the glad tidings of salvation, were worthy of the glorious cause in which they embarked. Nor were their effects less remarkable: The word of the Lord ran and was glorified, and the increase of believers truly surprising.

But

But this interval of reſtraint was of ſhort duration. The 4th chapter informs us, that perſons in place, and power, could not brook the growing proſperity which attended this extraordinary work. "The captain of the Temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached, through Jeſus, the reſurrection of the dead." Their number was increaſed to about five thouſand, when the high prieſt, with his relations, thought it time to interpoſe, and make uſe of their power and influence, to cenſure and repreſs it. But as miracles were wrought by the Apoſtles, in confirmation of their divine miſſion, ſo likewiſe, were miracles wrought for their deliverance from their perſecutors. Such wonderous interpoſition, together with the judgement of God ſo lately, and ſo awefully diſplayed againſt thoſe who endeavoured to impoſe on them by a falſe profeſſion of Chriſtianity, had aſtoniſhed the council before whom they were arraigned. They threatened—they reprehended them for diſregarding their threats. They impriſoned them; but found them in the temple. It now therefore, became neceſſary to treat them in a different [illegible]. Hence, through a fear of the people, rather than the fear of God, without the violence they had previouſly exerciſed on this occaſion, they brought them again before the council. GAMALIEL made one among thoſe who ſat in judgement over them at this time; and and gave his opinion in the words of the text.

To improve the ſubject further, Gamaliel's advice, and his reaſon for giving it, may now be taken into conſideration:—

## I. GAMALIEL's ADVICE HERE GIVEN.

1. And firſt, to form a right judgement of advice, 'tis frequently helpful to conſider ſomething of the character of its author. For although truth is too ſacred a thing to become falſehood, and falſehood too baſe to become truth; yet are they frequently made to put on each other's dreſs, to ſuit the different motives of evil-deſigning men. And though truth cannot be annihilated, by the worſt of characters, yet may it hereby be greatly weakened, and ſometimes diſcredited: while, on the other hand, a fair uniform conduct, adds weight to its importance, and greatly conduces to eſtabliſh its authority. But this is ſtill more, eſpecially the caſe where particular ability accompanies ſuch uniformity, and a popular ſituation holds up the man to public attention. In the ſame degree, therefore, as theſe ingredients met in the perſon before us, they were rendered uſeful in the Apoſtles' behalf.

GAMALIEL appears to have been in his day, a perſon of conſiderable eminence: his mind naturally calm, and his paſſions ſo regular as neither to deſtroy, nor materially injure his ideas. And, to this, may we not add, what is ſo generally connected herewith, namely, a civil, courteous diſpoſition? A bright genius, and ready wit, had probably recommended him to the public, while his extenſive acquaintance with literature, was calculated to improve, and ſet them off to the beſt advantage. 'Tis not improbable that he was alſo an eloquent ſpeaker; one who could deliver his ſentiments on any ſubject, in a clear, agreeable and convincing way.

But what is unſpeakably more valuable, is, that he appears to have been a man of moderation: a perſon to be

eſteemed

eſteemed for the ſolidity of his judgement, and the juſtneſs of his concluſions. Nor does it appear that he was influenced by thoſe principles of bigotry which poiſoned the minds of the rulers who ſcourged and impriſoned the Apoſtles. He diſcovers milder ſentiments, and recommends peaceable and equitable meaſures, let their character be what it may.

3. Some attention paid to the character of thoſe concerning whom it was given, may alſo very properly lead us on to diſcover the propriety, wiſdom, and excellence of ſuch advice. And this could not but be known to all who ſought to be intimately acquainted with them; and who impartially ſurveyed their manner of life. The acts which they performed were not hid in a corner, and the performers themſelves were evidently the epiſtle of the Lord, in which men might diſcern the divine Author.

From the menial employment of fiſhing, &c. they were raiſed to the dignity of Apoſtles; taught to catch men, and build the living temple of God in the world. Their call and miſſion were attended with a ſimple grandeur ſuited to the diſpenſation of which they, with their bleſſed Maſter, were to be the miniſters and eſtabliſhers. They were illiterate, ſimple, plain-hearted perſons; and hence, as much incapacitated to deceive, as perhaps any men. Their natural, or acquired abilities, appear to have been of no conſideration. As far as we know, one of them only had the privilege of a liberal education; and he was as one born out of due time. But their own inſufficiency could be no obſtacle with him who called them; and their faith was not to ſtand in the wiſdom of men, but in the power of God.

Of

4. Of theſe, our Lord choſe twelve, to be his particular attendants; to go out and in with him, and to be witneſſes of all he did and taught. But beſides theſe, he alſo choſe ſeventy; whom he ſent forth to preach the word, and to work miracles in proof of their divine miſſion. It does not, however, appear, that either their number or influence was great, till after the day of Pentecoſt; at which time all the diſciples together amounted to no more than a hundred and twenty. Yet theſe, deſpicable as they may appear, were engaged to perform the greateſt work on earth; namely, to diſciple the nations: to turn men from darkneſs to light, from the power of Satan unto God; to tranſlate them into the kingdom of his dear Son, and hereby ſet up a ſpiritual dominion, that never ſhould end.

In doing this, they had to encounter and overturn Judaiſm and Paganiſm, with the unnumbered prejudices built thereon, which then overſpread the earth. They were literally, therefore, as one obſerves, a hundred and twenty againſt the world: or rather, againſt the world and devil combined. Whereſoever they went, poverty and want, mockings and ſcoffings, ſtripes and impriſonments, afflictions and death, attended them. Their doctrine was new and novel; and, hence, unſupported by the laws of their country, and, perhaps, condemned by the laws of other countries, in which they propagated it. So, that, humanly ſpeaking, they might be ſaid to carry their lives in their hand, or offer them up as a ſacrifice, as often as they delivered their meſſage.

5. To do juſtice to their perſecutors, it is right to obſerve, they were men profeſſing religion. Nay more; they were miniſters in the houſe of God; for we are told

they

they were prieſts. Their office, then, demanded a more eſpecial reſemblance of him, to whom in behalf of the people, they ſo frequently approached; who ſendeth his rain on the juſt and the unjuſt, and who is kind to the unthankful and unholy. But of all perſecutors, thoſe frequently become the worſt, who, having the form of religion, are deſtitute of its power. Indeed, the company they kept, would not ſuffer our expectation to riſe very high in their favour, although, had not awful proof demonſtrated the contrary, we might have reaſonably ſuppoſed they could never have made themſelves ſo vile as is here repreſented. At this however, we are no longer ſurprized, when we conſider the manner in which they treated our Lord; whoſe moſt inveterate enemies, were thoſe who made the greateſt profeſſion of religion. What then could the ſervants expect, if the maſter were thus treated?

6. But they were not ſent a warfare at their own coſt. He that commiſſioned and qualified them for their work, equipped them for their warfare. Nor, to the preſent hour, doth God call without preparing his meſſengers, on their compliance herewith. He did not, it is true, inveſt them with temporal power, and arm them with carnal weapons; but gave them what was much more effectual for their purpoſe, namely, his glorious Goſpel and holy Spirit.

By theſe, then, was the wond'rous work began at the Pentecoſt, carried on with a rapidity and power, that aſtoniſhed and confounded every ſpectator. The Apoſtles were enabled to bear the glad tidings with which they were intruſted in every language of the babling earth.

The

e ſpirit alſo, in which they ſpake and acted, ſo much re-
nbled their bleſſed Maſter's, that it could not but be no-
ed by their very perſecutors: "They took knowledge of
em, that they had been with Jeſus." They were wiſe,
d humble; diligent and patient; magnanimous and
ntle; ſuffering ill, yet doing good to all men. They
ld with propriety ſay, Be ye followers of us, as we
of Chriſt Jeſus the Lord. This was calculated, as a
mmer, to drive the nail of their precept in a ſure place;
d cauſe their miracles not barely to ſtrike the eye, but
ult the heart. And indeed, ſo greatly was the power of
d diſplayed, and ſo ſurpriſing its effects, that the ſick
re reſtored, devils were caſt out, oracles were ſilenced,
gs inſtructed, princes ſubdued to the obedience of
riſt, and the goſpel of the kingdom extended to every
t of the known world.

7. Such were the men now before GAMALIEL; and
h their communications. They were, it is true, GAMA-
LIEL's priſoners; but they were the Lord's free men.
is was diſplayed by the preſence of mind, recollection,
freedom with which they addreſſed the council. Their
ſter had prohibited their ſtudying before-hand what
y ſhould ſay on theſe occaſions; but he ſo aſſiſted them,
t while their anſwers were unpremeditated, they ex-
ded the wiſdom of *Cicero*, and the eloquence of *De-
ſthenes*. Their conſcience condemned them not; hence
d they confidence towards God, and undaunted bold-
s before men. They were not confounded—not
amed; for the love of God was ſhed abroad in their
rts. Nay, they dared to reprove, and warn even their
y judges! and with the greateſt faithfulneſs, cleared
mſelves from the blood of all men.

8. A man of GAMALIEL's obſervation, could not therefore but perceive, from theſe circumſtances, ſomething peculiar in the caſe, ſpirit, and conduct of the Apoſtles. He was, doubtleſs, acquainted with their impriſonment and myſterious deliverance; and had minutely obſerved their demeanour in the court. Their intrepid conduct could not but affect him, together with their inviolable attachment to the doctrines they advanced. Zeal for propagating, and unſhaken firmneſs in defending the truths they taught, were features too prominent in their conduct to remain unnoticed by GAMALIEL. While, on the other hand, he heard no accuſation of blaſphemy, treaſon, injuſtice or even malevolence, brought againſt them. The whole charge in their indictment was preaching the Goſpel: a doctrine as unpopular as new, with the rulers of the Jewiſh nation. But though GAMALIEL was one of theſe, he did not fully imbibe their ſentiments, or come into their meaſures.

We may naturally ſuppoſe, his riſing in the council diffuſed reverence and attention through the court; and raiſed with expectation the minds of thoſe who were acquainted with his ability and eminence, to the higheſt pitch of elevation. How greatly, then, muſt they be disappointed, on hearing him expreſs himſelf ſo favourable towards the Apoſtles. But if the Jews had their prieſt and captain, the Apoſtles had their counſel in the court; and that too without fee or reward; one whoſe heart was influenced and words directed by Him who reſtraineth the wrath of man, and maketh the reſidue thereof to praiſe him.

9. The advice delivered by GAMALIEL, on this occa-
ion, was becoming a man of foreſight, deliberation, and
andour. The caſe, in his opinion, demanded the great-
ſt caution; with this, therefore, he wiſhed them to pro-
eed. 'Tis the part of every wiſe man to reject a mode of
onduct that any way reſembles taking a leap in the dark.
e who ruſhes forward, right or wrong, can have no juſt
reſence to ſo ſacred a character, the road which is mark-
d with precipitance, is commonly ſhaded with grief.
AMALIEL proceeds differently; he judges right, and ad-
iſes well. He ſpeaks like one having the authority of
ears and experience; and confident of the importance of
hat he ſpake. "And now, therefore, I ſay unto you,
efrain from theſe men, and let them alone:—

How much is it to be wiſhed, that the candid conduct
f GAMALIEL were more perfectly and generally copied,
oth by the church and the world? For, alas! how fre-
uently is it the caſe, that chriſtians are not only uncha-
itably dealt with by the world, but conduct themſelves
omewhat in the ſame way towards each other; to the
eat injury of real religion? But whenever ſuch ſimila-
ity of conduct has been diſplayed by perſons ſo oppoſite
n ſpirit and practice in other reſpects, it has commonly
een with this difference, that the attack made on God's
eople by the men of the world, is on account of real
eligion; whereas what has introduced diſputes, bitter-
eſs, and war among themſelves, is the diſagreeing in
entiment, reſpecting its circumſtantials merely, or ſome of
s parts. If a thing be evidently good, ſhould we refrain
rom it through fear of the croſs, or leſt ſome evil ſhould
ome? And if, on the contrary, manifeſtly evil, ſhould

any thing induce us hereto, that good, such as riches, honour, or pleasure, may be either acquired or retained? Should it appear in a middle way, neither clearly good nor obviously evil, the mind is then left at liberty to deliberate and determine on what shall appear most eligible best adapted to its own peace, and the felicity of mankind. But should the newness and suddenness of any occurrence be calculated to puzzle us; in a case of this nature, GAMALIEL's advice may pertinently apply, and be eminently useful. The plain purport of which is, Lay no violent hands on these men. Refrain from your present proceedings against them. Make no ill use of your power, by destroying the happiness, disturbing the peace, or abridging the liberty of your fellow creatures. But let them enjoy, what you and all mankind most particularly desire and prize; the freedom of their own religious sentiments. Let them quietly choose their own way of worshipping the God of their Fathers.

10. And who does not see the reasonableness of such advice? And yet how great is the number of its objectors. But on what are their objections grounded? Why, perhaps, on the doctrines and things being new. That they are sentiments which they neither understand nor approve. Or their being an innovation on the established religion of their country: and as such exposing to ridicule sacred things.—But such considerations did not weigh with GAMALIEL; nor could they have had any weight with those who persecuted the disciples of our Lord, had they properly reflected that every man must be guided by his own judgement and conscience, and give an account of himself unto God. For if we cannot possess another man's conscience, or give account to God for another; we cannot with any colour of *reason* much less

religion, oblige a man to receive our own ſet of notions, or become the choolers of *his* creed.

Much leſs, then, have we any authority to impriſon, puniſh, and ſlay, ſuch as do not fall in with our own modes of devotion and addreſs unto God. For whatever be the principles of ſuch as are perſecuted, we are perſuaded that perſecutors can have no real religion; ſince the very eſſence of perſecution is a ſpirit of pride, wrath, injuſtice, bitterneſs, &c. Perſecution erects her principles as a ſtandard for all; and accounts herſelf infallible. She baniſhes liberality of ſentiment, and requires implicit acquieſcence. She annihilates that golden rule, "Whatſoever ye would that men do unto you, do ye even ſo to them:" and eſtabliſhes juſt its reverſe. She is devoid of all ſympathy: her heart is adamant, and her tender mercies cruel! Nay, more; her abettors frequently do not examine the principles of thoſe they perſecute; but conclude on hear-ſay, and puniſh on conjecture!

How many excellent perſons have felt the force of this, while they have been loaded with abuſe, deprived of their character, and embarraſſed in their circumſtances, merely becauſe they have been connected with religious perſons of ſome deſcription, againſt whom their opulent neighbours have been hugely prejudiced without any other knowledge of them, ſaving that of the name? Such unhappy perſons, forgetting the wiſe maxim of hearing before they judge, never hear at all; and, hence, inſcribe folly on all their proceedings too capitally for the candid and diſcerning not to read.

Every man ought, then, moſt ſeriouſly to conſider, that whatever liberty he wiſhes to enjoy himſelf, cannot fail

of

of being dear to another, though poorer in circumſtance, and unrefined by a liberal education. Of this, the author of the advice before us appears ſenſible and tender; and would to God, that every Ruler and Magiſtrate, throughout the world, may always be duly impreſſed with the propriety hereof.

We now come to conſider

## II. GAMALIEL'S REASON FOR GIVING THIS ADVICE.

1. In this GAMALIEL takes them on their own ground. He makes a ſuppoſition of its being as they had concluded, a work of mere human invention; and reaſon's in that caſe, on the folly of their unneceſſary diſquietude, and violent proceedings againſt the Apoſtles. He ſeems to accommodate his expreſſions to their opinions; propoſing it as a counſel; a deep laid plan; but immediately, as it were unawares, falls into his own, of its being rather a ſudden work, than any contrived or premeditated deſign. And who, that with due attention ſurveys the Apoſtles' proceedings, cannot ſee the propriety of this ſentiment? For 'tis evident, that in the beginning of the wonderous work which took place at the Penticoſt, they had no particular plan; but moved as they were led by the Holy Ghoſt. Not that the things of God commonly remain long unreduced to order for the inſtruments of it are directed by Him who is the lover of order, and not the author of confuſion. But, doubtleſs, that which appears wildneſs and confuſion to the world, may, on the whole, appear regular and glorious in the ſight of God: ſince the world by its wiſdom knows Him not, and the carnal man diſcerneth not his operations. All the advantages

of

of a liberal education, are inſufficient to furniſh us with a right view of divine things. GAMALIEL himſelf, who was not only a perſon of conſiderable learning, but was inſtructed in all the principles of the Jewiſh Religion, ſpeaks of them as ſtrange things. And indeed, the genuine work of God, eſpecially where its progreſs is rapid, always, more or leſs, puzzles and confounds the men of the world.

But one is ready to reply, I like a *rational religion*; Religion that is not conſiſtent with Reaſon is not of God. True, if Reaſon be properly guided by divine Revelation; otherwiſe it may be totally falſe. And if it be directed by this unerring light, 'twill then be natural to conceive, that very great agitations muſt take place, in a work ſo rapid as the firſt eſtabliſhment of the chriſtian church. Sighs and lamentations, groans and tears, trembling and ſmiting on the breaſt, &c. are the ſcriptural repreſentation of genuine effects produced by powerful conviction for ſin. And ſhall we then be ſo ſtraitened in our bowels as to ridicule a work attended with ſuch effects now? Or deny its being of God becauſe the manner of his operation herein does not exactly agree with the ideas we had formed of it; that is to ſay, becauſe JEHOVAH does not work by *our rule*? Let us bluſh at ſuch narrowneſs of ſpirit, and let our infidelity humble us before the Lord!

We would not ſo vindicate a remarkable revival of religion, produced by an uncommon outpowering of the divine Spirit as to affirm it free from any alloy or mixture of our own. At thoſe ſeaſons, there may be many things which the meſſengers of Jeſus Chriſt diſcover to be ſo interwoven with a genuine work of grace as that the ſtrik-

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ing violently at the wild ſprouts, would manifeſtly for the preſent, endanger the whole tree. And which then would be the worſt, the remedy or the diſeaſe? Surely it cannot require a peculiar depth of ſagacity to determine this.

2. A work is ſaid to be of man, not ſimply as being the performer of it, but rather from the nature of the work itſelf, together with the principles and end with which we engage therein. That, therefore, which is properly the work of man, is like him; bears a ſtriking reſemblance of its author. Now, if we here underſtand man detached from God, or ſimply in a natural ſtate, (which evidently appears the intention of the paſſage,) we are told by St. Paul, that, conſidered in this view, he is of the earth, earthy. Man then, conſiſtent with this definition of the Holy Ghoſt, muſt be worldly and ſelfiſh in his principles and end; attached unto, and purſuing his eaſe, or intereſt, pride, or pleaſure. And theſe, governing the natural man, form his whole life. A work, therefore uninfluenced by theſe, nay, viſibly performed in direct oppoſition to them, cannot be ſaid to be merely the work of man; but beſpeaks a divine Original, and claims Him for its author; from whom deſcends every good and perfect gift.

3. A work of God, then, hath God for its author; and is known by the reſemblance it bears to Him. If it be his, 'tis inſpired by his Spirit. The Holy Ghoſt is the grand agent and operator herein. 'Tis He that quickens men to a ſenſe of their want, that draws them out in good deſires, and begets them again to a lively hope in Chriſt Jeſus.

'Tis directed by his Word. This is the unerring rule of our faith and practice; and this, therefore, becomes the

proper

proper teſt of all our profeſſion and experience. The children of God dig in it, as in a rich mine, for hidden treaſure; and hence they are inſtructed in all things neceſſary to make them truly wiſe. Herein they find gold, pearls, and precious things; calculated to enrich the underſtanding, rectify the heart, and adorn the life. 'Tis therefore the line and plummet by which they proceed; and by which the work of God is carried on and completed in the earth.

And it is He that protects it. Had not this been the caſe, how long ſince muſt it have been extinct? But God is the fence of his vineyard, and hath declared he will keep it night and day. His almighty power, goodneſs, and faithfulneſs, as an impregnable bulwark, ſurrounds his own. The everlaſting arms are placed underneath them, and they are a wonder to many, while God is their refuge.

From the paltry things and periſhing trifles that ſurround them, it leads to ſubſtantial good, and brings them to the ſource of perfection, and fountain of happineſs. The true centre of the ſoul is here clearly diſcovered, and her reſt effectually obtained. Aſpiring to the height of her ſublime privilege, ſhe here walks with God, by faith in Chriſt Jeſus, and anticipates the glory that ſhall hereafter be revealed.

Divine Love is the very eſſence or ſoul of it. This, as a main ſpring, ſets all its wheels in motion. And this not only animates, but keeps it alive; and ſpreads its diſintereſted influence far and wide. Through this ſacred fire, ever aſcending to its glorious ſource, it burns with a flame

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which many waters cannot quench, neither the floods drown. And hence it becomes light and pleaſant to all who heartily engage herein. Theſe prove the propriety of that paſſage, "Her ways, are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths peace."

Moreover; it diſplays the Glory of God. This is the great end to which it leads; and this it eſtabliſhes by the ſalvation of mankind. For if God be glorified in his works at large, how much more in this his greateſt and beſt of works, creating us a-new in Chriſt Jeſus!

The Inſtruments too by whom it is effected, reſemble the work itſelf. They are men of clean hands and pure intentions. Their ſpirit and work are the ſame. Their whole ſouls are engaged in it. They know that a diſpenſation of the goſpel is committed unto them; and they travel in birth for the good of their fellow creatures. They conſider themſelves accountable for their high calling; and long, above all things, to ſee the kingdom of Chriſt eſtabliſhed below. They do good and ſuffer evil; and are willing to ſpend and be ſpent for God.

Peace and Joy, Meekneſs and Gentleneſs, Courage and Boldneſs, Uprightneſs and Truth, are the happy and inſeparable conſequences of ſuch a work. Whereſoever it proſpers, theſe ſpread their ſalutary influences; while reading and hearing God's word, inſtruction and reproof, prayer and praiſe, become the employ of all its votaries. A new face of things overſpreads the deformity of nature, and a pure language is poured on mankind. Righteouſneſs ſprings up from the earth, and Peace looks down from heaven: Obedience reigns below, and JEHOVAH ſmiles

ſmiles from above. And thus is a genuine work of God demonſtrated unto us.

4. Had not the Jews, then, been involved in ſhades of the moſt palpable prejudice they had diſcovered theſe, like ſo many ſun beams, meeting together in the character and conduct of the Apoſtles. But ſin unreſiſted, grows upon us, and ſhuts out all that light which otherwiſe would convey full conviction to the human mind. And hence, the perſons who rejected the aſtoniſhing evidence conveyed by the Son of God, found it the more eaſy to ſet aſide that which ſhone upon them in the ſpirit and practice of his Meſſengers and Apoſtles. The nature of the work was ſufficiently diſplayed; but as thoſe who ſhut out the beams of the ſun cannot properly diſcern the nature of objects, ſo neither could thoſe who ſhut out the light of the Spirit diſcern the ſigns of the times. Their darkneſs was from themſelves, and not from the things of which they pretended to be judges.

5. But had it been otherwiſe, and as they ignorantly and maliciouſly ſuppoſed, a ſcheme of their own framing, a contrivance to make themſelves appear great, ſomething above the common rank of mortals; they had reaſon to conclude, time would diſcover the artifice, and render their whole attempt vain and fruitleſs. A plan of aggrandizement as to wealth, it wore not the leaſt appearance of, it being totally oppoſite to the way which their own prudence muſt ſuggeſt the moſt likely to ſecure that end. Eaſe and earthly pleaſure, it could have no pretenſion to, ſince it obviouſly rejected both. And had it been a poliſical ſyſtem, formed with a deſign of oppoſing govern-

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ment, and bringing about a revolution in the state, their weakness sufficiently exposed them to the secular arm, which doubtless could any time have taken care of them. In either case, therefore, any such interposition at present, must be extremely ill-judged, premature and needless.

To illustrate this, GAMALIEL proposes two instances in *Theudas* and *Judas of Galilee*. Who those men were, the learned are not agreed; but they are presidents which appear to be well suited to those sentiments which the council entertained of the Apostles. The former, 'tis evident, had ostentation for his object; and the latter, in all probability, political affairs. For he rose up, we read, in the days of the taxing; and 'tis not unlikely that it was in opposition to it. Both these, he tells them, together with numbers of their followers, fell victims to their vain and wicked opinions: and the rest were scattered. Should, therefore, the men whose case they were now considering, resemble those, they might naturally expect something similar to overtake them, whenever their scheme of folly and iniquity should be ripe for destruction. And should it, on the other hand, prove counter to their present persuasion, they would then have a fair opportunity to mark the event, without involving themselves in difficulty and danger, too late to remedy.

6. Hence, therefore, he wisely observes, "If it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it." How happy would it be, did the enemies of his people duly consider this? And how strange is it that they do not? It is a truth which God hath been verifying for nearly six thousand years. And yet, so astonishing is the power of infidelity, that

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numbers in the preſent day believe it not; but vigorouſly ſtrive to pull down what he upholds. This ſtrife, which began ſoon on ſins entering the world, and hath more or leſs continued to the preſent time, together with the wiſdom and power of God oppoſing it, are ſet before us in his word, with a perſpicuity ſufficient to ſatisfy every candid and impartial obſerver. Nor can the folly and vanity of ſuch conduct, be leſs conſpicuous.

But here ſome diſtinction ſhould be made between the work itſelf, which is the thing ſpoken of, and the inſtruments employed to carry it on. For though God is as able to ſecure the inſtruments, as to maintain his work in the world; yet hath he not always thought good ſo to do. Nevertheleſs theſe, at times, have been amazingly and miraculouſly preſerved. How was this manifeſted in the character of *Eliſha*, when ſurrounded by the Aſſyrian Army, that ſought his life? And was it not further diſcovered, in God's care of *Jeremiah*, at the time when *Jeruſalem* was taken and ſacked by the *Babylonians*? So alſo was *Daniel* preſerved in the lions' den; and the three Children in the fiery furnace? And ſo wonderouſly was the care of our Lord diſplayed towards the Apoſtles, that they might, in a ſenſe, be accounted immortal till their work was done.

And although, at other ſeaſons, God hath permitted them to be expoſed to the rage and fury of their perſecutors; yet hath he herein more particularly diſplayed his powerful grace in ſupporting them under, what he did not think fit to ſave them from. And while they have become a ſacrifice to the truths they taught, the work of God hath been completely protected and defended. Hence

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all the variety of torture, invented and executed against its instruments, could not suppress or stop its growth; for the number of its votaries increased more rapidly than the rage of their enemies could cut them off. Thus, it maugred all their diabolical inventions and malicious exertions, and reproached their feebleness and wickedness together. For, like the famed bush, while it burned it was not consumed; but increased like *Israel* in *Egypt*, and flourished like the Palm tree, under the greatest pressure. So true was it, that the blood of the Martyrs was the seed of the Church; and so greatly hath the work of God triumphed over all its opposers!

7. Nor need we greatly wonder at the ill success of its enemies against the cause of Christianity, if we reflect that the cause is God's; that persecution is a direct attack on his right and heritage: and that He enters the lists in defence of his own. For we cannot but be struck with the unequalness of the match. When potsherds strive with potsherds of the earth, our minds may well be held in suspence as to the uncertainty of the issue. But here the inequality of the combatants, can leave us no room to hesitate which will finally prevail. For the contest is between the creature and the Creator. A man lifts up his hand against GOD! A worm hopes to overcome the ALMIGHTY! What an extreme of madness and wickedness is this! It is no other than rushing on JEHOVAH's [illegible] thunderbolts of his right hand! buckler, and daring the [illegible]

What marvel then, that he is represented to laugh them to scorn, and hold them in the utmost derision.

8. Sometimes he checks and represses the sons of pride in their first onset. Hence he is said to have his hook in their

eir noſe, and his bridle in their lips. Denoting his omplete power over them, and his ability to curb, or rn them about at pleaſure. To take off their chariot heels, ſo that they can move but ſlowly and ineffectually, the ſecuring their end. "He takes the wicked in their wn craftineſs." And if therefore he have ſometimes permitted them to drive like *Jehu*, and to carry on their hemes ſo far that there ſeemed nothing wanting to complete their deſign ſave juſt the finiſhing touch; if they ave been permitted to glory for a time in their diabolical nning, and bleſs themſelves in the expected ſucceſs of eir proceedings; it has frequently been that his gracious re toward his cauſe and people might be more fully diſayed, in rendering the whole abortive, and laying their vourite bable in the duſt; and that his enemies might ore keenly feel the diſappointment, and gnaſh their eth at the mortifying event.

8. Beſides: Such a mode of conduct has proved not arely unſucceſsful againſt God's cauſe, but highly danerous to the perſons of perſecutors themſelves; for they ave frequently fallen into the very pit which they dug or the deſtruction of God's ſervants. So did *Jeremiah's* nemies fall by the *Babylonians*; and *Daniel's* were deroyed by the very thing they had contrived to accomliſh his death. Thus alſo, thoſe who took up *Shadrach*, *Meſhech* and *Abednego*, were ſlain by the flames of that urnace in which theſe holy perſons walked unhurt. *Haman* was hanged on the gallows he had prepared for *Mordecai*; and the Jews, afterward, fell into the very puniſhment which they feared as a conſequence of the doctrine and miracles of our Lord; and againſt which they

blindly ſuppoſed, or hypocritically pretended, their be
gaurd was the ſhedding his innocent blood. And in a
ages of the world whereſoever perſecution hath reigne
the event has been, in a greater or leſs degree the ſame

Perhaps there is no ſin which God hath ſet himſelf mo
deciſively to puniſh than this. Violent perſecutors are a
moſt ſure to meet with ſome awful viſitation from his hand
Inſtances of this nature have been ſo recent as to fall with
in our own time & knowledge. Many of them have die
violent and unnatural deaths; and others of them hav
from a ſtate of affluence, been ſpeedily brought into po
verty and contempt. Whereſoever they have turne
themſelves, God hath ſhut up their way to proſperity, an
they have lifted up their heads no more. Whoeve
conſults the late Mr. *Weſley's* Journals may be ſufficiently
informed of this truth.

And it were much to be wiſhed we had ground to co
clude that the awful nature of their viſitation did not e
ceed the limits of time. But, alas! where the ſpirit o
perſecution is retained; where the Spirit of God, whic
is the Spirit of Love, is not permitted to operate; an
where Religion, which is Love, is diſcarded; there can be
no ſaving alliance with its great Author who is INFINITE
LOVE. And as the Saviour of men cannot be receive
while principles ſo repugnant to that charity which
brought him from the ſkies to ſave us are cheriſhed in
the human breaſt, ſo there can be no preparation for th
ſociety of angels, and the enjoyment of heaven. How
ever fair, therefore, the character of perſecutors may ap
pear in other reſpects, this alone muſt inevitably exclud
them

them from future happineſs. This is awfully indicated where the Redeemer tells us "It were better that a mill-ſtone were hung about their neck, and they caſt into the depths of the ſea, than that they ſhould even offend the leaſt of his ſervants."

9. How then, at the laſt day, will perſons who have harboured ſuch illiberal & injurious principles, from marked *Cain*, down to the infamous Mary; look thoſe in the face whom they have killed, perſecuted, or delighted to grieve on account of religion? Their ſouls are ſaid to cry for vengeance; and doubtleſs therefore, when their noble army is complete, the long gathering ſtorm will univerſally burſt on the heads of their oppoſers.

How greatly then, will the face of things be altered? At preſent thoſe who mock at real religion, who deſpiſe and oppreſs the ſons of God, are held in eſteem; but they will then be branded with infamy, and covered with eternal diſgrace. Their very appearance before them at that day muſt be painful in the extreme. To what confuſion and ſmart muſt the pit into which they deſcended alive, give back *Korah* and his company once more to ſtand before *Moſes*. How will the enemies of the greatly beloved *Daniel* behold then his exaltation and glory; the bare ſhadow of which they could not endure in an earthly court! With what unſpeakable affliction and pain will thoſe who killed the Prophets ſee them amongſt the angels of God! How will thoſe who perſecuted to death the apoſtles of the Lamb, bear to ſee them ſeated on twelve thrones around their Redeemer! And thoſe who have

thirſted for the blood of his ſervants down to the preſent time, or that ſhall ſeek to deſtroy or grieve them for their attachment to Him, from this period to the end of the world; how will they view them at the right hand of the Judge!

But above all, how will perſecutors who have ſo often, and ſo maliciouſly wounded him in is cauſe and his ſervants, appear before the Son of God! How will *Judas*, who under the garb of friendſhip, betrayed the Son of Man with a kiſs, ſtand before his injured Maſter! And how will the Jews to whom more eſpecially he came, but who received him not; who refuſed to believe on him; nay, more, who clamoured for his blood, and purſued him to *Calvary*: how will they then, behold their King, with the appearance of thoſe ſcars he once received from their hands!

And how will perſecutors, of any deſcription, abide the day of his coming: but eſpecially that bear the Chriſtian Name, and have been brought up in a Chriſtian Country! And, farther ſtill, you that aſſemble, at times, in his houſe and worſhip, and bow at his altar; is it poſſible that you ſhould perſecute and hate your brethren, merely becauſe they worſhip God in ſome way differing from your own? Is this treating others as yourſelves, in a like caſe, would wiſh to be treated? You know it is not. And can you think then, that the benevolent Jesus will approve of ſuch conduct when he is revealed from heaven in flaming fire? Will ye not rather tremble before him? And will not his very preſence drink up your ſpirits? Will not his eyes of flame flaſh horror through your ſoul, and his voice be

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more terrible to you than ten thousand thunders? Will ye not vainly implore the rocks to fall on you, and the mountains to hide you from his presence? Will not your very existence be such a burden to you, that you will ardently wish its annihilation? I pray, let all persecutors consider what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of a sin avenging God; from whose tribunal there is no appeal, and from whose power there is no deliverance.

How will ye hear him pronounce your doom, and address you with a "Go from me ye cursed into everlasting fire?" Can you deem it a small thing to be put into the possession of devils, and to be dragged away to their infernal abode? Will they be mild and gentle like those you have persecuted? Will they not rather give you large and terrible measure, for your unjust and cruel conduct towards them? Yet these, dreadful as they may appear, are but a small part of the portion of your cup.—Survey, then, your danger, ere it be for ever too late. Stop while you may. Drop now the weapons of your rebellion. Look unto Him whom you have pierced, whether in his cause or his servants; and mourn for your offence. Be ready to ask pardon both of him and them; and make all the restitution that is in your power for the injury you have done. And who can tell but God may yet be merciful unto you? Surely he shall if ye come thus humbly unto him; for he giveth grace to the humble. But do not delay a moment: To-morrow may be quite too late.

And what shall I say to you my brethren who are called to suffer for your Lord and Master? If such here be in the presence of God, I call upon you as my companions

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the kingdom and presence of Jesus, to bear with calmness and fortitude whatever shall come upon you for his sake. And that ye may properly do this, look to Him who is gone before you; who patiently endured the contradiction of sinners, and left you an example that you might tread in his steps. Be thankful that the power of God surrounds you; that your enemies can proceed no further than permitted from above; and that ye live under a mild Government whose laws defend both your persons and privileges.—What though ye be smitten, then, for the present, by the tongue of Slander, or become the jest and ridicule of the prophane; all this shall but drive you nearer your divine Refuge. A little longer and it all will end. Courage, thou Christian Soldier! A few more difficulties and the conquest is gained, The battle will be fought, and the victory eternally won. A few more painful sighs and tears; and then thy great Redeemer shall remove them all, and transport thee to the heaven where thou wouldst be; to the land of glorious peace, and beatific vision; where no enemy can approach, and where pain and sorrow can never come.

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